



OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



VIEWPOINT
Arnaud Cauchois



FORUM
Kåre Vøllan

DAO Kathmandu Regd. No. 148/11/063/064
ISSN: 2091-0711

NEW SPOTLIGHT

www.spotlightnepal.com

Dec-15, 2023

FORTNIGHTLY

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Kathmandu DAO Regd. No.

148/11/063/64

Central Region Postal Regd.

No. 36/067/068

US Library of Congress Catalogue

No. 91-905060, ISSN : 2091-0711

(Print), ISSN: 2091-0754 (Online)

Printing

Megha Offset Printing Press P. Ltd.,

Dhapasi, Kathmandu

Tel. : 977-1-4363624

Notes From The Editor



Nepal has made significant progress in generating, transmitting, and distributing electricity in recent years, despite facing several challenges. It is noteworthy that Nepal has even begun exporting electricity to India within the past two years. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been a crucial development partner for Nepal's energy sector for the last four decades. The opening of the strategically significant 220 kV Dana-Kusma-New Butwal Transmission Line marks the beginning of a new era for Nepal's energy industry. This development is expected to have a significant impact on the industrialization of the Butwal, Bhairawa, and Nawalparasi corridor. Additionally, it will reduce power saturation on the 132 kV Pokhara Bharatpur Transmission Line and improve the quality of power supply in Pokhara. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has become a significant development partner for Nepal, with a portfolio of about \$1 billion. Thanks to ADB funding, the 144 MW Kaligandaki Hydropower project, the country's first major three-digit project, has significantly advanced economic development. Although contractor problems caused delays, the ADB-led 140 MW Tanahu Hydropower Project is currently progressing well. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), which has a portfolio of approximately \$1 billion, has become a significant development partner for Nepal. This week's cover article focuses on Nepal's advancements in the energy industry and ADB's assistance, along with other significant national concerns such as the monetary policy review, Nepal's participation in COP 28, and the Ncell scandal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keshab Poudel'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

CONTENT

NEWSNOTES	3
BUSINESS BRIEF	8
OPINION	
Dipak Gyawali	10
MONETARY POLICY REVIEW	
Adjusted Interest Rate	12
VIEWPOINT	
Arnaud Cauchois	21
FORUM	
Kåre Vollan	22
COP 28	
Lost Mountain	24
PROYEL	
Youth Empowerment	26
ARTICLE	
Dr. Chandra Lal Pandey	30



COVERSTORY: SASEC POWER SYSTEM EXPANSION : A Game Changer 14



NCELL TELECOM ISSUE : Hurting FDI 25



INELAM : Small Victories Toward Transformative Journeys 32

European Union And Save The Children To Handover 800 Winter Tents To Earthquake Affected People

Save the Children, with support from European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Operations, has received 800 life-saving winter tents, which will be distributed to the earthquake impacted areas of Jajarkot and Rukum West. The tents were handed over to Save the Children by the EU Ambassador to Nepal, Veronique Lorenzo in an event in Kathmandu. Since the earthquake, 32 people, including three children, have died due to extreme cold.

The tents provided by the European Union (EU) will be dispatched to the earthquake-hit areas in close coordination with the government’s national disaster risk reduction management (NDRRM) authority. The tents are fire retardant and waterproof, equipped with stoves, provide a total living area of 23 square meters and are apt to resist harsh winter conditions.

“The EU is happy to extend this meaningful support of tents and other logistics that will be distributed to the earthquake victims in Jajarkot and Rukum West. The support that has come at an opportune time will help save lives of the women, infants and the elderly in the two earthquake hit areas,” Ambassador Lorenzo said.



The 6.4 magnitude earthquake that hit Jajarkot and Rukum West on 3rd November has disproportionately impacted children, pregnant women, older people, and people with disability. Heather Campbell, Country Director, Save the Children in Nepal said: “The freezing cold has resulted in the deaths of many, and there is an urgent need to ensure that people most marginalized and impacted are protected. These winter tents supported by EU will ensure temporary protection and shelter and help save lives.”

In addition to the material assistance, Save the Children will continue to work with local partners, in close coordination with the government, to respond to the most urgent needs of vulnerable communities affected by the earthquakes thanks to € 600,000 (865.5 million NPR) funding provided by EU humanitarian aid.

Foreign Secretary Paudyal Retired, Sewa Lamsal Entrusted Acting Secretary

Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal Has Retired From The Service.

Senior joint secretary Sewa Lamsal entrusted with acting secretary.

“I have taken retirement from my 37-year-long

civil service career today”, Poudyal wrote in the social media.

The government has recommended the name of Poudyal as the Nepali Ambassador for Canada. Likewise, the parliamentary hearing committee has already endorsed the recommendation.

With the compulsory retirement of Secretary Paudyal, senior Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been entrusted with the responsibility of acting foreign secretary.



UN Urges Investments And Actions To End Gender Based Violence In Nepal

The United Nations in Nepal emphasized the crucial need for sustained investment and innovative strategies to prevent gender-based violence in Nepal, at an event held in Lalitpur to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence 2023.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive violation of human rights that reverberates across the world affecting one in three women globally and more than one in four women in Nepal. Gender-based violence can be prevented – but urgent investments are needed to fulfill the promise of a life free from violence for women and girls, including those affected by humanitarian crises.

Convening a collaborative event in this regard, the United Nations urged the government, development partners, civil society organizations, private sectors, media, and women’s rights organizations to increase investments in preventing violence from happening in the first place.

Speaking at the event, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Hanaa Singer-Hamdy said, “Each one of us has a responsibility to extinguish the flames of violence that threaten the lives and wellbeing of women and girls. As we mark the 16 Days of Activism, I want to highlight the urgent need for investing both monetary and collective will to end gender-based violence in Nepal.”

With the overarching theme, “Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls,” the event organized in Lalitpur encouraged investment and innovative strategies in this sector.

The Finland Ambassador to Nepal, Her Excellency Riina-Riikka Heikka, said, “Violence prevention supports



NEWSNOTES

basic human rights, accelerates economic development and improves revenues and also helps to respond and build back better from the crisis". She also urged all sectors to come together and invest in preventing GBV by all means.

The first phase of the event commenced with a Gallery Walk, immersing around 100 participants in the powerful stories of resilience and courage shared by survivors of gender-based violence, and innovative initiatives dedicated to ending violence against women and girls.

Thai Embassy In Kathmandu Hosted A Reception To Mark Thai National Day

The Royal Thai Embassy in Kathmandu organized a reception on the occasion of Thailand's National Day as well as the Birthday Anniversary of the Late King Bhumibhol Adulyadej The Great, and Thai Father's Day at Hotel Hyatt Regency.

Manusavee Monsakul, Charge' d' Affaires a.i. presided over the opening ceremony of the reception at which the Ram Sahya Prasad Yadav, Vice President of Nepal, participated as Chief Guest.



The reception was attended by high-ranking government officials, diplomatic corps, former Ambassadors of Nepal to Thai-

land, UNDP Resident Representative as well as Heads of Mission of international organizations in Nepal, representatives from the private sector, media and Thai community in Nepal.

During the program, Manusavee Monsakul, Charge' d' Affaires a.i highlighted the various aspects of Thai-Nepal relations and importance of national day celebration.

Nepal - Australia Joint Advisory Committee On Water Resource Management

The first Nepal-Australia Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) under a new Memorandum of Understanding on Water Resource Management took place on 23 November, 2023, in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Water and Energy Commission Secretariat's Secretary Sushil Chandra Tiwari, together with Australia's Ambassador to Nepal, HE Felicity Volk co-chaired the meeting. The JAC provides a platform for bilateral engagement in areas of mutual interest such as river basin planning and governance, the energy-water nexus, spring shed revitalisation, hydrometeorology, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.

The meeting endorsed a joint program of work

that included the Kamala River Basin Action Plan; support for the Nepal Basin Information System; modelling of Pokhara and Tulsipur's water sources to determine the efficient allocation



of water for commercial and domestic-use; and a training package for federal and provincial officials on integrated river basin management, drawing on Australia's experience in basin planning and management. The six-week training program is expected to start in January 2024.

JAC membership consisted of Director Generals from the departments of Electricity Development; Hydrology and Meteorology; Water Resources and Irrigation; along with representatives from Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

Australian experts, Dr Jane Doolan, Member of Australia's Murray Darling Basin Authority and Mr Simon Krohn (Member, Australian Water Partnership) presented on Australia's reform challenges in the water and energy sectors. They undertook a range of public engagements during the week, including a guest lecture at the Department of Water Resources Development, Institute of Engineering, a policy seminar with Independent Power Producers Association Nepal and Department of Electricity Development, and appearance podcast by PEI hosted by Policy Entrepreneurs Inc. (PEI).

WVI Nepal Provides Relief Materials To Jajarkot Earthquake Victims

In the wake of the devastation in Jajarkot, World Vision International (WVI) Nepal has been responding to the dire needs by providing essential support to the families affected by the earthquake in close coordination with the government of Nepal.

As of 29 November 2023, WVI Nepal in partnership with the local NGO Panchtara Yuwa Samrakshak Manch (PTYSM) have supported the affected families and children with 1000 sets of food and non-food shelter kits along with 648 sets of kitchen kits, 652 sets of winterization kits and 640 sets of hy-



giene kitsin grimly affected Nalgad Municipality and Bheri Municipality in Jajarkot to equip them with immediate relief support. A total of 500 sets of dignity kits are also being distributed this week to adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women. The food and non-food items have been supported through distribution programs since 5 November to ensure the well-being of the displaced population.

A total of 26,557 houses have endured complete damage thereby forcing several families to seek shelter in open spaces embracing the extreme cold nights in Jajarkot, West Rukum, and other neighboring districts. Besides private housing, the earthquake has also inflicted significant damage to school buildings and classrooms, bringing a halt to students' education and uncertainty as to when classes will return to normalcy.

Six Nepalis Serving In The Russian Army Have Died: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that 6 Nepalis serving in the Russian army have died. In a statement issued on Monday, the Ministry said that it has received information about the death of 6 Nepalis.



In the statement issued by the ministry, it is said,

“This ministry has received the information that 6 Nepali citizens died in Russia recently while serving in the Russian army.”

According to the ministry, Sandeep Thapalia of Gorkha, Rupak Karki of Banganga 1 Kapilvastu, Dewan Rai of Kaski, Pitam Karki of Putlibazar 5 of Syangja, Rajkumar Roka of Melung 6 Dolakha and Gangaraj Moktan of Ilam 5 died.

The statement also said that the government is taking initiatives to bring back the bodies of those who died while serving in the Russian army as soon as possible.

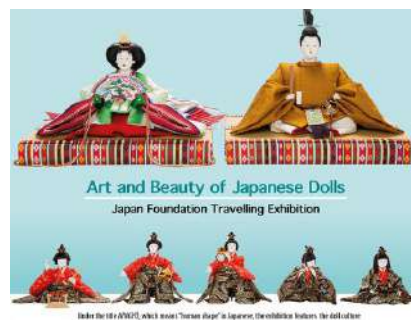
“The government of Nepal has requested the Russian government to send their bodies to Nepal as soon as possible and to provide relief to the families of the victims,” the statement said.

Japan Foundation Traveling Exhibition “NINGYŌ: Art and Beauty of Japanese Dolls”

Aiming at introducing and promoting Japanese culture to the people of Nepal, the Embassy of Japan and the Japan Foundation are going to hold an exhibition “NINGYŌ: Art and Beauty of Japanese Dolls” in Kathmandu from December 6 to 21.

Official opening ceremony of the Exhibition will be held at 4.00 p.m. on December 7 (Thu.) at Nepal Art

Council Gallery, Babar Mahal. The exhibition will remain open for free to the general public from December 6 (Wed.) to 21 (Thu.) from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. everyday except for December 7,



when it will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The exhibition presents a comprehensive introduction to Japanese doll culture, from the archetypes of dolls in Japan, to local dolls that reflect the climate and anecdotes from across the country, to dress-up dolls that are beloved in Japan today as toys, and to scale figures that are highly regarded around the world.

Both Nepali and Japanese peoples embrace traditional culture and crafts as well as contemporary art. Through this exhibition, it is hoped that the visitors will experience the variety of Japanese doll culture and its long history.

Japan Provides Grant For Construction Of Girls Hostel In Lalitpur District

Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, signed a grant contract for the construction of a girls' hostel at Shree Kali Devi Secondary School (SKDSS) in Lalitpur district with Amira Dali, President of Love Green Nepal and the recipient of the Imperial Decoration of Japan.

The signing ceremony was held at the Embassy of Japan in Kathmandu today. This project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Government of Japan and includes a grant of USD 156,881 (approximately NPR 20.5 million).

SKDSS was established in 1962 and serves as the main educational institution for approximately 400 students in the southwestern part of Lalitpur and the nearby Makwanpur district.

However, some students are from remote areas and have to commute long distances or rent rooms to attend school. This situation has constituted a barrier to safe education and academic performance, especially for female students.

This project aims to provide a safe and educationally effective foundation by constructing a hostel for those female students who face challenges in attending the school.



NEWSNOTES

It will be managed by Love Green Nepal, the non-governmental organization which has been working in the fields of education, environment, agriculture, women empowerment, community development, etc. since 1991.

The Embassy of Japan believes that this project will contribute to the improvement and creation of a better educational environment for female students in Lalitpur and the nearby district. We also hope that this assistance will further strengthen the friendship between the people of Japan and Nepal including for generations.

GGP was established to implement projects that directly benefit people at the grassroots level for the socio-economic development of communities. Since 1991, over 200 GGP projects have been completed in Nepal.

National Assembly Chair Timilsina Held Meeting With Australian Parliamentarian Speaker And President Of Senate

Ganesh Prasad Timilsina, Chairperson of the National Assembly of Nepal held a meeting with Senator the Sue Lines, President of the Senate and Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Australia together in Parliament House today.

They expressed their pleasure over the happily subsisting bilateral relations as well as growing exchanges of high-level visits between Nepal and Australia. The Speaker Hon Milton Dick recalled his recent visit to Nepal and underlined the importance of such high-level visits



to further consolidate bilateral relations between the two countries.

During the meeting, they exchanged their experience and views on the parliamentary functions and systems in federal set-up both in Australia and Nepal. Ambassador Kailash Raj Pokharel accompanied Chairperson during the meeting.

Chairperson, who arrived in Australia on 27 November 2023 on an official visit of Australia leading high-level delegation, met with Ben Franklin, president of Legislative Council and Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of NSW parliament as well as Ms Joy Burch, Speaker of Legislative Assembly of ACT parliament on 28 and 29 November respectively.

Israel Embassy Hosts Closed Screening And Survivor Testimony: Condemning HAMAS Attack On October 7

The Embassy of Israel hosted a closed screening featuring 47 minutes of horrific video footage depicting the October 7 attack by H A M A S terrorists on Israel. Members of parliament, journalists, and policymakers were invited to witness evidence not previously shown by the media.



Dhan Bahadur Chaudhary, a survivor of the attack, began by lighting a candle and sharing his terrifying experience from the day of the attack at Kibbutz Alumim, near the Gaza border.

Tragically, 10 Nepali students fell victim to the brutal actions of HAMAS terrorists. Bipin Joshi remains held hostage in an undisclosed location in the Gaza Strip, while six students survived the attack with various injuries.

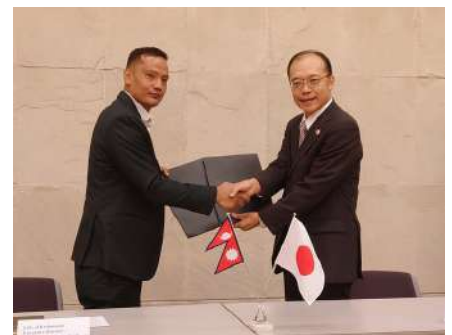
The heinous attack on October 7 resulted in over 1,400 casualties, with 240 individuals taken hostage (155 still in captivity). This prompted Israel to declare war against Hamas, aiming to eradicate the extremist organization, ensure the security of civil society, and bring all hostages' home.

Ambassador Goder emphasized, "October 7 serves as a stark reminder of the importance of values such as democracy, humanity, respect, and tolerance. Israel extends its hand of peace to all its neighbors committed to upholding these values."

Japanese Assistance For New Classroom At Chandrawati Secondary School In Udayapur District

Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, signed a grant contract with Mr. Babu Ram Gole, Executive Director of Kids of Kathmandu, for the construction of new classrooms at Chandrawati Secondary School in Udayapur District.

The signing ceremony was held at the Embassy of Japan in Kath-



mandu today. This project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Government of Japan and includes a grant of USD 65,298 (approximately NPR 8.5 million).

Chandrawati Secondary School was established in 1960 and has about 330 students. Some of the current school buildings are more than 30 years old, with many cracks in the walls and severe leaks in the roofs. They are also not earthquake resistant. It is hardly a safe and suitable environment for learning and needs to be improved as soon as possible.

This project aims to improve the educational environment by constructing new classroom buildings at the school and will be managed by Kids of Kathmandu, which has been working to improve the educational environment in Nepal. The Embassy of Japan believes that this project will provide a suitable learning environment for students and improve the quality of their education. We also hope that this assistance will further strengthen the friendship between the peoples of Japan and Nepal, including future generations.

GGP was established to implement projects that directly benefit people at the grassroots level for the socio-economic development of communities. Since 1991, over 200 GGP projects have been completed in Nepal.

Helvetas President Regula Rytz In Nepal Visited Various Projects

Regula Rytz, the President of Helvetas, Switzerland's development agency, visited Koshi Province to observe the ongoing projects recently. During the visit, she held a meeting with Kedar Karki, the Chief Minister of Koshi Province, to discuss current projects and possible cooperation.

Positive feedback was received for Helvetas' support in Nepal and especially in Koshi Province. The purpose of the visit was to obtain project background information and engage in discussions with local leadership to promote sustainable development.

On November 23, President Rytz visited Sunsari and Dhankuta districts. According to Helvetas representative, Om Khadka, there is a program for direct observation of the ongoing project during the visit.

Additionally, on Wednesday (November 22), President Rytz visited Premier Wire Industries based in Biratnagar. She collaborated effectively with project staff and trainers in the industry, emphasizing the importance of vocational training to enhance local skills and boost employment prospects.

As part of the visit, the delegation attended the life guidance program at Saraswati High School in Duhbi, Sunsari, where President Rytz also addressed the students. She also met with the mayor of Duhabi municipality to discuss how education can contribute to the area's overall development and secure a brighter future for the youth.

During her visit to Dhankuta, President Rytz observed a trail bridge constructed over the Leuti River. She gathered information about the bridge's utility in the local community by conversing with the local residents. President Rytz also engaged with participants in a professional cooking workshop that was held in Dhankuta.

During the workshop organized by the Dhankuta Municipality with the assistance of Swiss Project Insure, President Rytz committed that Helvetas will contribute to skill development and professional education, while utilizing technology.

President Rytz also visited Sunsari's Itahari and Inaruwa areas to inspect the Safe Migration, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TBET) project.

President Rytz also interacted with representatives from Barahakshetra and Itahari Municipality. The purpose of the visit was to support Helvetas' commitment to promoting the development of the Kosi Province.



President of Helvetas has extensive experience in human development in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, as well as the Regional Coordinator,

The Country Director of Helvetas Nepal Dr. Prabir Manandhar attended an exhibition of pictures related to the ongoing trail bridge project in the province. President Rytz, after surveying the exhibition, remarked that she had obtained information regarding the trail bridge's impact on the local community.

President Rytz met with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda at the Prime Minister's residence in Baluwatar. She also met with the leader of the main opposition party and former prime minister, KP Sharma Oli. The discussions during the meetings centered around cooperation and assistance to Nepal.

During her meeting with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachana, Helvetas President Regula Rytz focused on strengthening the existing relationship between Helvetas and the Government of Nepal. Helvetas has been working in Nepal since 1956.

It is reported that Prime Minister acknowledged Helvetas program intervention and technical assistance contributing to Nepal development discourse. The discussion also involved areas of mutual interest and collaboration.

BUSINESS BRIEF

ADB And World Bank Join Forces For Sustainable Development Of Nepal's Hydropower Sector

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank announced a collaboration to strengthen Nepal's hydropower sector, specifically in the context of the proposed Upper Arun and Dudh Koshi hydropower projects.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) stipulating cooperation between the two institutions for an initial period of 5 years was signed today on the sidelines of COP28 by ADB Vice-President for Sectors and Themes Fatima Yasmin and World Bank Vice-President for South Asia Martin Raiser.

"This agreement between ADB and the World Bank is a significant step in strengthening Nepal's energy security amid rising demands from population growth and urbanization. It also fosters power trade with neighboring countries, promoting regional cooperation, economic growth, and green and inclusive development," said Yasmin. "ADB is committed to promoting clean energy solutions that align with climate action goals. Our commitment goes beyond generating power; it's also about creating positive impacts on communities, livelihoods, and the environment and contributing to a more sustainable future for all."

"The full potential of Nepal's enormous hydropower resources cannot be realized without close partnership between the Nepalese government, development partners and the private sector," said Raiser. "With this MOU, ADB and the World Bank are laying the foundations for closer collaboration in financing and policy advice in Nepal's hydropower sector, with the aim to support the



country's green, sustainable and inclusive development for decades to come."

The pilot approach between the two multilateral development banks (MDBs) provides opportunities for collaboration in knowledge and experience sharing to ensure common understanding of

the hydropower sector in Nepal, joint analytical studies, and consultation in support of the development of the hydropower sector.

Under the MOU, ADB and the World Bank will also work together on strengthening the institutional capacity of Nepal's executing and implementing agencies in the development of large hydropower projects, and the preparation and financing of projects in the energy sector.

This is the first MOU signed between ADB and the World Bank following the joint statement on strengthening collaboration for greater impact issued by the heads of MDBs at the World Bank-International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings in Marrakesh in October 2023.

Himalaya Airlines Resumes Flight For Kathmandu-Chongqing-Kathmandu Sector

Himalaya Airlines, a joint venture between Nepal and China, is pleased to announce the relaunch of its highly anticipated Kathmandu-Chongqing-Kathmandu flight service, which commenced on December 12, 2023. This historic event marks a significant milestone in Himalaya Airlines' commitment to enhancing connectivity and promoting bilateral ties between Nepal and China.

The new Kathmandu-Chongqing-Kathmandu route will

offer passengers seamless travel options between the capital city of Nepal and the bustling metropolis of Chongqing, China. This direct link between the cities reflects Himalaya Airlines' dedication in providing convenient, safe, and efficient travel.

Chongqing, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, modern urban landscape, and economic dynamism, presents itself as an attractive destination for Nepali travelers, offering a unique blend of historical landmarks, culinary delights, and technological advancements.

The first outbound flight, H9 787, departed from Tribhuvan International Airport at 10:07 hours (local time) and will arrive Chongqing, Jiangbei International Airport, at 15:50 hours (local time), with a flight duration of 3 hours and 14 minutes. A total of 125 passengers boarded the first flight. The return flight will depart from Chongqing, at 16:25 hours (local time) and arrive Kathmandu at 18:35 hours (local time).

Effective December 12, 2023, Himalaya Airlines will be operating weekly two flights between the cities on every Tuesday and Saturday.

This signifies the fourth direct connectivity of Himalaya Airlines between China and Nepal including Beijing, Qingdao and Shanghai.

The relaunch of this route signifies Himalaya Airlines' commitment to expanding its network, catering to the evolving needs of travelers, and furthering its mission to provide direct, reliable and comfortable air travel experiences. With this addition to its network, Himalaya Airlines aims to facilitate business opportunities, tourism, and cultural interactions between Nepal and China, contributing to the strengthening of bilateral relations.

Himalaya aims to create memorable travel experiences while maintaining the highest safety standards. We look forward to welcoming travelers on board our flights and helping them explore the beauty and opportunities that both Nepal and China have to offer.

Passengers can now book their tickets for the Kathmandu-Chongqing-Kathmandu flights from Himalaya Airlines' ticketing counter, authorized travel partners as well as from the airline's official website: www.himalaya-airlines.com.

MECS – PEEDA Nepal 2023 Dissemination Workshop: On Accelerating Electric Cooking Scale Up in Nepal

Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) and People, Environment & Energy Development (PEEDA) held an event on December 5th at the Nepal Pavilion COP28 to highlight the opportunities and potential interventions to accelerate electric cooking scale up in Nepal and beyond. The event drew on findings from MECS, an eight-year programme funded by UK Aid (FCDO), and their global partners.

Over 30 representatives from key stakeholder groups, such as the global clean cooking and electricity sectors attended to hear talks



from Nawa Raj Dhakal, the Executive Director of Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, Nepal (AEPAC), Justine Akumu, Senior Energy Officer, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Uganda, Professor Ed Brown, Director of MECS Program, and Richard Sieff (MECS). A lively panel discussion followed where the first three speakers were joined by Ben Jeffreys, CEO & CO-Founder of ATEC Global, and Biraj Gautam, CEO of People, Energy and Environment Development Association (PEEDA).

Nepal And World Bank Launched \$ 103.84 Million Nepal Quality Health Systems Program

Government of Nepal and World Bank Launch \$103.84 Million Nepal Quality Health Systems Program to Strengthen Nepal’s Health System

The Nepal Quality Health Systems Program was jointly launched today by the Additional Health Secretary, Dr. Tanka Barakoti and World Bank Practice Manager for the Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice, Feng Zhao.

The Program aims to improve the readiness of the health system for delivery of quality healthcare, enhance coverage of health insurance, and strengthen health emergency preparedness and response capacity at the provincial and local levels.

The five-year Program is financed by a \$100 million concessional loan from the International Development Association and a \$3.84 million grant from the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Trust Fund.

“The Nepal Quality Health Systems Program supports three critical reform agenda envisaged by the Government of Nepal on its journey towards universal health coverage: quality of healthcare, financial protection in health, and resilient health systems” said Dr. Tanka Barakoti, Additional Health Secretary.

The Program will be implemented by the Ministry of Health and Population with the coordination of the Health Insurance Board at the federal, provincial and local levels in Koshi and Gandaki provinces to help achieve the strategic objectives of Nepal’s Health Sector Strategic Plan, 2023-2030. These include enhancing efficiency and responsiveness of Nepal’s health system, promoting sustainable financing and social protection in health, and promoting equitable access to quality health services.

“We are delighted that we can support the Nepal Quality Health Systems Program to help Nepal build a responsive, inclusive, and resilient health system—a key driver of Nepal’s Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID) agenda,” said Feng Zhao, World Bank Practice Manager for the Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice.

The financing agreements for the Program were signed in October 2023 by the Government of Nepal and the World Bank.

President Dhakal Invites UAE Investors To Invest In Hydro, Tourism, Agriculture, And ICT In Nepal

Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) President Chandra Prasad Dhakal extended a warm invitation to UAE investors, urging them to explore lucrative opportunities in Nepal’s burgeoning sectors.

With the presence of dignitaries including Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda,’ the forum marked a pivotal moment in the robust friendship and economic cooperation between the two nations.

In his address at the Nepal UAE Business Forum in Dubai, President Dhakal, representing the apex body of Nepal’s private sector, FNCCI, highlighted the PM Dahal’s commitment to economic revival, setting the stage for a thriving business environment.

Nepal’s external sector stability, coupled with a youthful population, creates a solid foundation for trade and investment, making it an attractive prospect on the global stage, Dhakal said.

Identifying key sectors for mutual growth, President Dhakal emphasized four areas with immense investment potential: energy, tourism, agro-processing, and ICT. He encouraged UAE investors to capitalize on Nepal’s promising energy market as regional markets open up, presenting a timely opportunity for impactful investments.

In the tourism sector, President Dhakal showcased Nepal’s significant infrastructure development, including additional international airports in Lumbini and Pokhara. He urged UAE investors to contribute to the development of world-class tourism infrastructure, including hotels, cable cars, theme parks, and hill stations, underscoring the potential for increased bilateral tourism.

Agriculture, a cornerstone of Nepal’s economy, presented another avenue for collaboration. President Dhakal invited UAE investors to explore opportunities in agro-processing, leveraging Nepal’s unique climate and the Himalayan region’s agricultural products. He called for tariff and non-tariff facilitation to enhance the sector’s growth.

The ICT sector, a growing force in Nepal, aligned with the UAE’s success in the digital economy, offering prospects for collaboration and knowledge exchange. President Dhakal envisioned a mutually beneficial partnership in this sector, fostering innovation and growth.

President Dhakal also highlighted the crucial role of banking and finance in trade and investment. Proposing a partnership to promote UAE investment in Nepal’s banking sector, he emphasized the potential to cater to the large Nepali population through operations of Nepali banks in the UAE.

Drawing attention to the Nepali workforce in the UAE, known for their hard work and integrity, President Dhakal proposed investments in technical and vocational schools to upskill the workforce, creating opportunities for joint growth. He shared his personal journey as a living example of what is possible in Nepal with government support and a favorable investment climate.

Expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Dahal for his commitment to drafting a Bilateral Investment Agreement between Nepal and the UAE, President Dhakal concluded by inviting the UAE business community to invest in Nepal. FNCCI, he assured, is ready to cooperate on all fronts to strengthen economic relations between the two nations.

As the forum concluded, the invitation resonated, opening new avenues for collaboration and reinforcing the belief that the synergy between Nepal and the UAE can script a joint story of growth and prosperity.



New World Disorder And The Case For Ideology



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

Most of us primarily still active oldies alive today lived in a world of ideological clarity: horrors of World War-2 brought about by its fascist commanders had ended; the victors were divided into US-led Western liberals focusing on individual human rights or the Russian/Chinese communists who put primacy on societal interests over that of the individual; and the only question was who could provide better and faster development. Now that certainty has ended and the old post-WW2 World Order is dead; but a new one is unborn, with even its basic character unknown.

If one looks at the horrors inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza, it is ironically the Collective West that reminds one of WW2's fascist disregard of innocent human lives while erstwhile communist Russia, China and the non-aligned of the Global South come out as defenders of liberal individual values. Even the very concept of development is under question: is unlimited market-led prosperity for the 1% and penury for the remaining 99% (especially in the US as Bernie Sanders points out) compounded with environmental carnage of land, sea and air what it is all about? And if a more equitable economic order is to be sought, does conventional "democracy" with squabbling parties and elections deliver that better, or does a more "authoritarian" order that focuses on governance as Modi and Yogi down south are demonstrating? For Nepal, with the country in the grip of a kleptocracy (but painted as "democratic") and its impotent parliament handmaiden to it all, has not the UK Westminster model imported via India failed multiple times and run out of hope with its latest Loktantrick loot? Has not the alternative Chinese model to the north not delivered better in uplifting hundreds of millions out of poverty?

There are difficult questions to answer that lie ahead before any broadly acceptable clarity will emerge; but a beginning needs to be made going much further back to the very origins of capitalism, which is not a universal human thing but an anomaly born around 1500AD at the western end of the Eurasian peninsula. The best place to begin, before one gets lost in Marxist cacophony, is Prof. Stavrianos's brilliant reframing of global history not as that of countries or its distinguished rulers but as that of the history of the process of Third Worldization with the rise of capitalism.

He argues that it emerged from several unique historical contexts of Western Europe not found elsewhere: lack of a resource-sucking empire after the fall of the Roman order; decentralized manorial, self-sustaining feudal economy; a Christian Protestant reform that glorified labour, forbade enslaving its members and advocated simple living eschewing ostentatiousness; emergence of a cross-border merchant class more powerful than feudal barons that managed to force the Church to allow interest payment on lent money that earlier was banned as sinful usury; the invention of the joint-stock company which allowed massive capital pooling from small investors for very large profit-making enterprises that even rich individual kings could not risk; and the Black Death bubonic plague that decimated labour, which forced precocious development of labour-saving technologies (and ultimately military ones) that built on earlier scientific renaissance.

This new dynamism of market-led first mercantile and later industrial capitalism triggered fights for both resources for production as well as markets to sell the produced goods. Countries that managed to establish production enterprises that converted raw material into finished products and sold them to consumers elsewhere became the First World. Others that exported raw material and natural resources and ended up buying industrial goods, often on very unfavourable terms of trade, became fatalized colonies of the Third World. Stavrianos argues that the first place to become Third World was Eastern Europe, followed by North America that was so Third Worldized that it disappeared into miserable Native American reservation ghettos. Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East (after the fall of the Ottoman Empire) followed the path into Third Worldization.

Japan was the only country to avoid that fate; and countries like Nepal, Thailand and Afghanistan avoided political colonization but not its economic consequences. Nepal could have perhaps become Japan in this matter if she had faithfully followed its founder Prithvi Narayan Shah's injunction in Divya Upadesh to rely on products of one's own industry rather than that brought by import merchants. Sadly, that was not to be with subsequent rulers, including present ones who think exporting a raw material like hydroelectricity that is a critical input to production to a monopsony market will bring prosperity. It will for sure

only enhance Nepal’s Third World status!

The fight for resources and markets has seen unending wars, the big ones often talked about being WW1 and WW2; but other military interventions from the 16th century right down to the present are no less significant. The case of the United States, in practically unending wars (against the native dwellers even before its declaration of independence from Britain), is proof if any were needed. One of the most insightful thinkers who demonstrated the inextricably entwined nature of capitalism with militarism to ensure capital accumulation has been Rosa Luxemburg. Again, if any proof were needed, the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine as well as that in Gaza today demonstrate that fundamental reality of the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex in the current world order that General Eisenhower so presciently warned everyone about.

Indeed, as West African intellectuals such as Samir Amin have described it, post-WW2 European reconstruction via Marshall Plan was predicated on France and Britain giving up their colonies allowing US capital easier entry to those places. Furthermore, in cementing US hegemony over

Europe, NATO military alliance was crucial. As its first secretary general Lord Ismay put it, its purpose was “to keep the Americans in, Russians out and the Germans down”. Looking at how the German energy market was snatched away from the Russians and captured by American fracked shale oil and gas with the blowing up of the NordStream2 pipeline, the Germans indeed are being kept down and headed towards deindustrialization.

Today, as the post-WW2 Pax Americana world order is winding down – with American debt crossing 33 trillion dollars, manufacturing exported to China and East Asia, and its finance capital further losing clout with its weaponization via economic sanctions – the world is at the same point it was in just before WW1 with powerful European countries fighting for colonies and resources, and in 1933 with Germany and Italy smarting at the French and the British for having a stranglehold on Third World colonies. The only difference this time is the rise of the non-West – China, Russia, India and rest of the BRICS – who are also entering into the fray for resources and markets. And what they, having more or less broken the manufacturing and military monopoly of the West, bring

to the table are civilizational values very different from the Judeo-Christian ones of the Collective West. How that will shape the new world order is yet to be seen.

This is where political ideology enters the picture. What are we fighting for, to build what and with what kind of a vision? The ideological divide of the 1950s to 1990s collapsed with the Berlin Wall; and the fight for social justice against an exploitative market took a back seat. Socialist (i.e. believing in social, environmental and multi-generational justice) countries like China, India and Russia went for capitalist – and as a Luxemburgian corollary, military – power in a manner no different from

Countries that managed to establish production enterprises that converted raw material into finished products and sold them to consumers elsewhere became the First World. Others that exported raw material and natural resources and ended up buying industrial goods, often on very unfavourable terms of trade, became fatalized colonies of the Third World. Stavrianos argues that the first place to become Third World was Eastern Europe, followed by North America that was so Third Worldized that it disappeared into miserable Native American reservation ghettos. Latin America, Africa,

the Collective West in order to challenge it. But, as Karl Polanyi has so presciently pointed out, his political economy being later than Marx but distinctly more explanatory, the battle continues to be: should societies serve the market or should markets serve society? And how is that to be decided?

This fight is even more acute in under-developed countries like Nepal. Its political class – whether Nepali Kangress’s BP Socialism, or the UML’s Marxism-Leninism, or the Noida Maoist’s Maoism – has jettisoned all such beliefs to serve comprador business interests (dalal punjibad, in Nepali). It is not for nothing that the Chinese, during the 1996-2006 “peoples’ war” period, used to refer the Noida Maoists as “anti-government bandits besmirching the name of Mao!” But, like good capitalist elsewhere, i.e. Americans as per Roosevelt’s dictum of good SoBs being OUR SoBs, they quickly chose to embrace them to further Chinese interests. Long-term Nepali interests will not be furthered without parties having political ideologies that uphold them. Currently only the RPP has one upholding tradition and its values; but we are yet to see a party that genuinely upholds overall social justice, especially for the country’s disadvantaged and marginalized poor in the face of a rapacious market.

MONETARY POLICY REVIEW

Adjusted Interest Rate

With the review of Monetary Policy, Nepal Rastra Bank reviews expects revival of economy

By A CORRESPONDENT

Even a week after the revision of monetary policy, which readjusted the interest rates in shares and real estate, by Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the market has not responded as expected. Despite a three-digit jump in the share market, it has again declined.

Similarly, although there has been an adjustment in real estate investment, the impact on the market is yet to be seen. The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has made adjustments to the bank rate and policy rate during its first quarterly review

of the monetary policy for Fiscal Year 2023/24, which took place from mid-July to mid-October.

The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has made adjustments to the bank rate and policy rate during its first quarterly review of the monetary policy for Fiscal Year 2023/24, which took place from mid-July to mid-October. In its review, the NRB demonstrated flexibility by reducing both rates. The bank rate was lowered from 7.5% to 7%, while the policy rate was reduced from 6.5% to 5.5%.

The bank rate is the inter-

est rate that the central bank charges to banks and financial institutions to influence the base rate of the BFIs. Similarly, the policy rate is a short-term interest rate that a bank charges when lending to other banks.

The Governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank, Mahaprasad Adhika-



ri, stated that the first quarter review of the monetary policy for the current fiscal year is based on several factors, including current inflation, the balance of payments, and the growth rate of bank loans for the private sector.

The Governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank, Mahaprasad Adhikari, stated that the first quarter review of the monetary policy for the current fiscal year is based on several factors, including current inflation, the balance of payments, and the growth rate of bank loans for the private sector. The Nepal

Rastra Bank (NRB) has implemented policies to facilitate loan expansion and business continuity for reliable borrowers.

Adhikari stated that the NRB will take strict action against debtors who do not repay their loans, while those who are genuinely struggling will be assisted with loan restructuring.

During a press conference held to discuss the quarterly policy review, the Governor announced that the NRB has been asked to disclose internal remittance information. After conducting a study, the central bank will set a

limit on transaction amounts.

The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has reduced the bank rate and policy rate after analyzing various factors that affect inflation, balance of payments, and private sector bank loan growth rates.

Additionally, the interest rate on bid-collected deposits has been lowered from 4.5% to 3%. The NRB has initiated this interest rate reduction, as stated in its review.

The NRB has announced that the mandatory cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio will

remain unchanged.

Additionally, the risk weightage of large loans going to securities has been reduced. The risk weightage of share mortgage loans above Rs. 5 million has been lowered from 150 per cent to 125 per cent.

Share mortgage loans below Rs. 5 million will maintain a risk weightage of 100 per cent. The aim of the monetary policy review was to increase the viability of the stock market by reducing the risk weightage in share mortgage loans.

Additionally, the risk weightage for real estate loans exceeding Rs. 5 million has been reduced to 125 per cent. Previously, the risk weightage for real estate loans exceeding Rs. 5 million was 150 percent.

Low-interest rates to build earthquake-damaged houses

The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has made a provision to provide loans at a subsidized interest rate for the reconstruction of residential houses that were damaged by the earthquake on November 3, 2023, in Jajarkot and Rukum West districts.

Similarly, for the reconstruction of public schools, public hospitals, and health posts damaged by the earthquake, banks and financial institutions can contribute up to 40% of the amount to be

spent separately to the corporate social responsibility fund from the profits of the fiscal year 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Additionally, the NRB has arranged that 50% of debentures issued by banks and financial institutions can be counted as resources until mid-July 2024.

“The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) stated that debentures issued by banks and financial institutions can be counted as resources at 100% until mid-January 2024. After this date, 50% of the debentures will be counted as resources until mid-July 2024.”

The NRB also allows bor-



rowers with problems to restructure their loans.

The NRB has announced that it will improve the effectiveness of actions taken against borrowers who deliberately default on their loans in the banking and financial sectors.

This will allow for loan restructuring and rescheduling to assist borrowers who are facing difficulties due to circumstances beyond their control. Additionally, a policy has been adopted to assist borrowers who are in regular contact with microfinance financial institutions (MFIs) but are unable to

continue paying their loans due to various circumstances.

The NRB has announced that borrowers who submit an application to the MFIs for loan restructuring by April 12, 2024, will have their loans restructured.

Meanwhile, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, stated that the first quarter review of the monetary policy, which was made public by the Nepal Rastra Bank on Friday, will boost investor morale to some extent and aid in the recovery of the economy.

Dhakal also noted that the review of the monetary policy showed flexibility in bank rates, policy rates, loan restructuring, and house and share loans. We have been consistently raising these issues for an extended period. The central bank has taken these issues into account. This can boost investor morale and encourage investment,” he stated.

“On behalf of the private sector, the FNCCI has repeatedly urged the Nepal Rastra Bank to make special arrangements in the monetary policy to bring the economy back on track. Now, our demands have been met. How much will the latest provision contribute to bringing the economy back to normal? He said, ‘That remains to be seen.’

Due to Nepal’s fragile economic indicators, there is widespread fear of another economic recession due to investment in unproductive real estate.

SASEC POWER SYSTEM EXPANSION

A Game Changer

The industrial sector in western Nepal has undergone significant transformation with the opening of the Kushma-New Butwal 220 kV Transmission Line project and the completion of the Kaligandaki Corridor (Dana-Kushma-New Butwal 220 kV Transmission Line project). The Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, and Nawalparasi districts can now rely on a dependable, high-quality, and ecologically friendly energy system. The transmission and distribution systems recently completed as part of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Power System Expansion Project (SASEC) by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have significantly increased the capacity of the region's power infrastructure, providing relief to industrialists.

By KESHAB POUDEL

The ADB-financed 220 kV Kali Gandaki Corridor Transmission Line Project is an important effort in view of Nepal's energy policy, which seeks to achieve zero emissions and rapid economic growth by 2045.

The project is definitely benefiting both the environment and the people of western

Nepal. Its significance is recognized by the region's business community, industrialists, and general public.

Everyone believes that this is a project that will change their lives, whether they are hotel owners in Pokhara, ordinary people living in Parbat district's isolated areas, business owners from the Rupandehi in-

dustrial corridor, or investors in Cliff Nepal, an adventure tourism center located in Parbat and Baglung.

Because of the low voltage, frequent power outages, and inconsistent supply, they must spend a lot of money on fossil fuels to mitigate the risk. Nonetheless, the situation in the neighborhood has changed.



Thanks to the consistent supply of electricity, the Cliff's owner is spending more and adding adventure sports, including a resort for guests.

"Power is the lifeblood of our company," emphasized Cliff owner Raju Karki. "Our ability to operate bungee jumps, sky cycles, and other adventure activities hinges on the availability of quality and continuous electricity," he added. "For the past ninety months, we've enjoyed a consistent and high-quality power supply."

Laxman Subedi, the President of the Hotel Association Nepal Pokhara, shares Karki's perspective. He asserts that the reliable electricity supply has eliminated the need for hotels to use fuel to power air conditioning and lights, resulting in decreased costs. The

electricity supply is not only reliable but also clean, green, and of high quality.

Since the completion of the first phase of the Dana-Kushma project nearly two years ago, there has been a significant improvement in Pokhara's overall electricity supply. The installation of transformers and conversion to three-phase power can now be accomplished swiftly, with Rajib Singh, the director of the Pokhara Distribution Center, highlighting the company's commitment to system improvements and technical support for customers. The steady supply of electricity from NEA's Pokhara office ensures minimal wait times. However, challenges exist in advancing the distribution system, as residents are reluctant to have transformers placed in

front of their homes despite the shared desire for reliable power.

Despite economic downturns prompting most industries to reduce capacity, industrialists in the region express satisfaction with the adequate power supply and infrastructure. Thakur Prasad Shrestha, President of the FNCCI Siddharthnagar Branch, noted, "Despite the economic recession impacting our factories' capacity, the consistent electricity supply and regional infrastructure have kept us content." Gratitude was expressed for the funding provided by the Asian Development Bank for significant projects, including the International Airport. With an improved electricity supply, there is optimism for the prosperity of the region "



The completion of the 220 kV Kaligandaki Corridor and the bolstering of distribution networks, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), mark the resolution of the energy crisis in the Rupan-dehi and Nawalparasi Industrial Corridor, as per Nawa Raj Ojha, head of the Lumbini Province of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). Ojha highlights that the project not only alleviates power shortages in the industrial corridor but also promises an improved power supply for Nepal's western and eastern regions, contributing to increased exports to India.

The Bhairawa substation of NEA now boasts a significantly increased supply capacity due to the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) project. Within the Rupandehi industrial corridor, three 33 kV substations, including the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), have been established. Formerly hindered by a lack of electricity, the SEZ is now seamlessly integrated into the national grid.

The power supply landscape in the Bhairawa industrial corridor, including the SEZ,

has undergone a transformative change. Sanjaya Kumar Mishra, the director of Bhairawa Distribution Center of NEA, affirms that NEA is well-prepared to provide necessary electrical connections to industrialists. The project has successfully implemented advanced substations featuring 132 kV and 33 kV connections.

The upgraded power supply has positively impacted the investment climate, creating a conducive environment for investments, according to Vinaya Kumar Goenka, a prominent figure in the food and beverage industry. Jan Hansen, prin-

cipal economist at ADB Nepal Resident Mission, emphasizes ADB's commitment to promoting clean and green energy for Nepal's economic growth. He adds that the new ADB Country Partnership Strategy for 2025–2029 will prioritize the development of the private sector.

Financial assistance from ADB has played a pivotal role in enhancing the energy sector in Nepal. NEA's Managing Director, Kul Man Ghising, is credited with leading Nepal out of a prolonged period of energy scarcity into a new era of illumination. Ghising notes the significant progress made in the energy industry, including the installation of multiple transmission lines, the development of hydropower projects, and the strengthening of distribution networks and substations.

Nepal's strides in energy generation, transmission, and distribution, with ADB's support, are underscored by Pushkar Manandhar, Senior Project Officer for Energy at ADB Nepal Resident Mission. He highlights the substantial contribution of the over \$900



million SASEC project to upgrading and fortifying Nepal's electrical system.

Manandhar claims that Nepal's power supply system will become more dependable after the Power Transmission and Distribution Efficiency Enhancement Project's distribution and control center construction is completed.

Kaligandaki Corridor

As the first leg of the project Dana-Kusma 220 kV Transmission line completed three years ago, the second leg of the project was completed on Monday, December 12, with the inauguration of the second part (Kusmma-New Butwal) by Minister of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation Shakti Bahadur Basnet.

This will contribute to a major decrease in the region's consumption of coal and fossil fuels by improving the western part of Nepal's overall electricity supply and making it more dependable and high-quality.

The ADB's Country Director for Nepal, Arnaud Cauchois, underlined the importance of the transmission line in delivering dependable and eco-friendly electricity. In the upcoming days, he also prom-

ised Nepal further investments in the clean energy industry.

Nepal's 'Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development' (GRID) plan has the full backing of ADB, according to Country Director Arnaud Cauchois. The plan emphasizes long-term green and sustainable growth, climate action, and resilience in the face of many dangers. It also adopts a proactive approach to tackling structural concerns.

"We acknowledge Nepal's progress in cross-border power trade. With the completion of this transmission line, which is connected to the New Butwal substation, one of the proposed points for cross-border power trade with India, Nepal will be able to utilize its resources for development and contribute to increasing the share of clean energy in the South-Asia region. Furthermore, it is expected that the Butwal-Bhairawa area, which is rapidly industrializing, will benefit from the power supply originating from the Himalaya and the hills."

He also commended NEA's outstanding efforts, particularly in the construction of the Kushma-New Butwal transmission line. NEA's commitment to



ensuring vigilant procurement practices, robust supervision and monitoring, and the allocation of adequate resources during the implementation of this transmission line is commendable. It is hoped that these best practices will continue in future projects, including the proposed 635 MW Dudh Koshi Storage Hydropower Project.

SASEC Project

The ADB assisted NEA in expanding the capacity of the country's power system and promoting the growth of renewable energy sources through the SASEC Power System Expansion Project. In addition to finishing the Kaligandaki corridor transmission line, the project has completed more than 200 kilometers of power transmission lines and substations, including those in the 220 kV Marsyangdi-Kathmandu Transmission line.

More than 1,000 kilometers of power distribution lines in the eastern, central, and western areas of Nepal have been completed under the project. Building mini-grid based solar and solar/wind hybrid energy systems is the project's way of bringing affordable renewable energy to remote locations.



COVERSTORY

With power connected through the 90-kilometer transmission line that runs from Kushma Municipality-2 Khurkot in Pavart to the New Butwal substation in Sunwal Municipality-13 Suryabasti in Nawalparasi (Bardghat Susta West), the industrial sectors in Butwal, Nawalparasi, and Rupandehi districts have experienced much-needed relief.

“This transmission line has provided us with uninterrupted, high-quality electricity, even though the economic recession has forced our industries to operate at just over 60% capacity,” said Keshab Bhandari, a member of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI).

“Voltage swings, frequent blackouts, and technical malfunctions were once commonplace problems. The situation has improved as a result of ADB’s transmission and distribution investments. Nepal currently provides a safe, dependable, and superior power source to our area. For this accomplishment, we are grateful to the government of Nepal, the ADB, and the NEA,” said Bhandari.

In August, the transmission line was put into service

once the section’s construction was finished. As part of the Kaligandaki Corridor 220 kV double-circuit transmission line project, a 130-kilometer double-circuit transmission line has been built in this section.

Project manager Chandan Ghosh said that the transmission line project under the SASEC Power System Expansion Project, funded by the ADB, originates at the Annapurna Rural Municipality-3 Dana substation in Myagdi, trav-

nects Nepal’s east-west power grid and facilitates international trade in electricity.

Within eighteen months, the Minister said, there will be no need to import electricity during dry seasons. “By 2035, the government wants to generate 28,000 MW of electricity. Federal, state, and municipal governments must work together to find a solution to the electrification of irrigation problem.”



In order to provide a high-quality power supply, Kul Man Ghising took office as Nepal Electricity Authority’s managing director for a second term, promising to improve the distribution system and grow the transmission network. In his first four years in office, Ghising

brought an end to Nepal’s decade’s old power outages. He underlined how important it is to finish building the extra transmission lines.

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MD Ghising said that the newly built New Butwal substation serves as an important center for the distribution of electricity east-west, for local use, and for export to India.

He noted that work is still being done to build transmission lines throughout the

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New Butwal.

“New Butwal substation will facilitate distribution and transmission within the country as well as support the development and bolstering of Nepal-India cross border transmission networks,” said MD Ghising/

MPs Khadg Basnet and Vajinath Jaiswal, representing Lumbini Province, have urged for the provision of reliable and high-quality electricity to support potential industrial growth in districts such as Nawalparasi and Rupandehi. They also emphasized the importance of fulfilling agreements made with locals during the construction of the transmission line project.

The construction of the Kaligand corridor transmission line has faced obstacles due to delays in obtaining the tree felling permit, local obstructions, and the Covid-19 pandemic. According to project head Chandan Ghosh, these issues have caused delays.

In 2074 BS, a contract

nation and that, over the next five to six years, this development is expected to cost an estimated 6-7 trillion rupees.

The project’s completion is a notable accomplishment, despite the intricate legal restrictions for tree removal during the Covid-19 outbreak. MD Ghising claims that the transmission line will promote Terai’s industrialization, help Nepal increase its output of ecologically benign energy, and allow it to export excess electricity to India.

The completed project include two sections of the transmission line along the Kaligand Corridor. In the first part, a 40-kilometer transmission line was constructed in Kushma Municipality-2, Purbat, from Dana to Khurkot. After completion and going into service, two substations, one in Khurkot with a capacity of 220 ÷ 132 KV and the other in Dana with a capacity of 220 ÷ 132 ÷ 33 KV, were built. In both substations, 100–100 MVA power

transformers were also erected. 236 towers have to be built for the second phase, Kushma-New Butwal. A 220 KV multi-circuit line from Sunwal Municipality-13 Badera to the New Butwal Substation has towers built for it.

In order to promote bilateral and regional power trade as well as local electricity consumption, a new 220 kV substation has been constructed in





ternational transmission line for electricity trading with India. The transmission line will also be used to export excess electricity from the country to

In his statement, MD Ghising emphasized the need for additional transmission lines, such as the 220 kV Kaligandaki corridor and the 400 kV Hetauda-Inaeruwa transmission line, to meet internal consumption and export demands. Investment from Nepal's major development partner, ADB, is crucial.

ADB has been one of Nepal's most important development partners since 1969, offering financial support for reforms as well as technical help and policy recommendations. ADB began with a US\$6 million concessional loan and a grant for technical assistance. As MD Ghising correctly noted, Nepal's energy sector depends on ADB's assistance, and the country cannot meet its goal of exporting electricity without ADB's help. Completion of this project as game changer in energy sector.

was signed with the Indian company L&T for the construction of the Kushma-New Butwal section.

"The Kaligandaki Corridor Transmission Line Project was funded by the Nepal Government and Authority, as well as concessional loans received from the Power System Expansion Project under the South Asia Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) of the Asian Development Bank. The revision process maintained objectivity, conventional structure, clear and objective language, and grammatical correctness. The estimated cost of the project is approximately 11 billion rupees," said Ghosh.

Upon completion of the New Butwal-Bardghat 21 km transmission line, infrastructure for the 220 kV transmission line will be established from Hetaunda to New Butwal. The construction of the 220 kV transmission line from Hetaunda to Bardghat via Bharatpur has also been completed and is now operational. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) will construct the New Butwal-Gorakhpur 400 KV in-

India.

According to manager Ghosh, the project has generated over Rs. 4 billion in revenue by evacuating electricity from the region and has a high rate of return.

As Nepal's installed power generation capacity has steadily grown from 706 MW in 2011 to over 2300 MW in 2023, requiring an average annual investment of 5 percent, Nepal needs significant investment in its transmission and distribution systems.



ADB Remains Committed To Supporting Nepal's 'Green, Resilient, And Inclusive Development'



BY: ARNAUD CAUCHOIS

I would like to first congratulate the Government of Nepal; Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation; the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA); and all the stakeholders on the successful completion and inauguration of Kushma-New Butwal 220kV transmission line.

I would also like to thank NEA and its project team for their outstanding work in completing a significant portion of the Kaligandaki corridor transmission line which includes the previously completed substations at Dana, Kushma, and New Butwal. We deeply appreciate your efforts in completing this project which was executed during the challenging times of COVID-19 pandemic, in difficult terrain and under complex legal and environmental conditions for right-of-way and tree clearances. We are delighted to note that private sector investment for hydropower development has gained momentum in Kaligandaki river basin with the construction of this transmission line. I understand there are more than a dozen 300-megawatt hydropower projects currently under development, and some have reached an advanced stage of completion.

We acknowledge the progress Nepal is making in cross-border power trade. We believe with the completion of this transmission line, which is connected to the New Butwal substation, one of the proposed points for cross border power trade with India, Nepal will be able to harness its resources for development and contribute to increasing the share of clean energy in the South-Asia region. Additionally, we also anticipate the rapidly industrializing Butwal-Bhairahawa area will benefit from the power supply originating from the Himalayas and the hills.

Allow me to highlight NEA's exemplary efforts, especially in the case of the construction of the Kushma-New Butwal transmission line. NEA's commitment to ensuring vigilant procurement practices, robust supervision and monitoring, the allocation of adequate resources, and the application of innovative approaches during the imple-

mentation of this transmission line is truly commendable. We

hope to see these best practices continued in future projects, including the proposed 635 MW Dudh Koshi Storage Hydropower Project.

We are confident that NEA will complete the remaining section of the transmission line corridor from New Butwal to Bardaghat by the first half of 2024. We strongly urge NEA to promptly address any social safeguard related to outstanding payments, as required in the financing agreements for the completed transmission line sections.

Furthermore, we take immense pride in our longstanding partnership with the Government of Nepal in the country's development, as well as over 50 years of active involvement in the country's energy sector. We have provided support for the recently inaugurat-

ed transmission line as part of the SASEC Power System Expansion Project, with the Government of Norway and the European Investment Bank as co-financiers. Within our active portfolio of \$3.6 billion, we have committed approximately \$960 million to the energy sector, with seven projects currently in various stages of implementation, covering areas such as generation, transmission, distribution, and renewable energy.

ADB remains committed to supporting Nepal's 'Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development' (GRID) plan, which takes a proactive approach to addressing structural issues and emphasizes long-term green and sustainable growth, climate action, and resilience in the face of multiple risks.

We are glad to be part of this event today and would like to congratulate you all once again.

Arnaud Cauchois is the Country Director of Nepal Resident Mission of Asian Development Bank. Excerpts of his remarks delivered at the of Inauguration of Kushma–New Butwal 220 kV transmission line at Bhumahi, Parasi.



Inclusion And Representation In Nepal's Federal Parliament



BY: KÅRE VOLLAN

In the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists in 22 November 2006, the parties committed “to address the problems related to women, Dalit, indigenous people, Janajatis, Madhesi, oppressed, neglected and minority communities and backward regions by ending discrimination based on class, caste, language, gender, culture, religion, and region.” Over time, the term “proportional representation” became a term, not only for political parties in proportion to votes, but also of caste and ethnic groups in proportion to their share of the population.

The electoral system to the House of Representatives (HoR) is a mixed system with 60% elected through first-past-the-post (FPTP) and 40% by List proportional representation (PR). Parties win seats in parliament in proportion to their share of the vote. In addition, an elaborate quota system was introduced, with fixed shares for Dalit, Janajatis, Khas Arya, Madhesi, Tharu, Muslims and backward regions. The election law has specified the share for each group, adding up to 100%, which meant that also the elite would be guaranteed seats in PR, in addition to the advantage they had in FPTP, and their quota represented a cap on the inclusion of excluded groups. In addition, women should have at least 50% in PR and at least 1/3 of the total membership in the HoR.

The quotas for all groups have produced an extraordinary complicated system, which has reduced transparency of the system, and more importantly, has set limitations to the possibility for achieving genuine equalities for traditionally discriminated groups. All quota rules reduce the equality of election. However, such rules are ac-

ceptable if they are designed to create genuine equality for otherwise excluded groups, such as women, Dalits, etc. With rules aimed only at removing discrimination, the system could be more transparent, simple, and the voters could see a closer connection to those elected from PR lists.

Who are the neglected groups who would need a push to be included in the HoR? One answer can be given by studying which groups win a fair share of the seats when no quotas are applied, such as in the FPTP part of the elections. By comparing the share of seats won by a group with its share in the population, one can conclude that Dalits and Muslims are excluded whereas Khas Arya always win seats far above their share of the population (even if there may be regional differences). Within Janajatis and Madhesi castes, there are groups, which fare well in elections and groups, which are systematically excluded. There is a “creamy layer” within the groups doing well, but many do only occasionally win seats. It turns out that the trends are very stable over time, from the 1991 elections until the elections in 2022. Groups representing 46.6% of the population (2021 census) have been able to win only from 9 to 15 % of the FPTP seats (with the exception of 2008 when they won 22%).

And the reverse: 53.4 % of the population win around 80-90 % of the seats. This indicates that quota rules could be designed to help the excluded groups to win more seats, rather than giving quotas for the elite. Today, Dalits are supposed to have 13.8% of the PR seats, but they cannot have more than that even if they would win only around 1 % of the FPTP seats.

The excluded groups would be Dalits,



International Conference on Federalism, Devolution of Power, and Inclusive Democracy in Nepal and Asia

22-23 NOVEMBER, 2023



Muslims, and some Janajatis and some Madhesi castes. There could be several alternatives for the implementation of quotas for excluded. Firstly, there should be minimum quotas, not exact quotas, there could also be minimum quotas on the whole membership of the HoR, such as the female quota of 1/3, and the PR side could be used to top up to reach the minimum.

The Constitution of 2015 states in its preamble that we, the sovereign people of Nepal; “[...] resolving to build an egalitarian society based on the proportional inclusive and participatory principles in order to ensure economic equality, prosperity and social justice by eliminating discrimination based on class, caste, region, language, religion and gender and all forms of caste based untouchability;...”

The “proportional inclusive” principle was only implemented for 40 % of the seats in HoR, whereas a targeted quota system could produce more inclusiveness.

The ethnic and caste quotas would hopefully over time show not to be needed to provide inclusive results. The quotas should therefore be re-examined at a regular basis, for example every ten years.

There has been criticism of the PR elections because people have felt that those elected from lists are not elected by voters but by parties.

Candidates for both races are nominated by parties (unless independent) and voters vote for lists with named candidates so both PR and FPTP are direct elections. However, the ranking of the lists is not followed strictly. Parties may jump down the list to fill a seat, but from 2015 onwards, they cannot skip a candidate, which fills a quota to choose another of the same identity. Still, this may be seen as a less transparent process. If the quota rules had been simplified it would be simpler to set up ranked lists, which would work for all results.

Another reform, which could be considered, would be for parties to set up provincial lists instead of national lists. Still, the national result would decide how many seats a party would win, but the seats would be filled from the provincial lists according to the number of votes won by the parties in the provinces. In this way, the distance from the voters to those elected would be shortened.

(Partial transcript from the author’s presentation at the International Conference on Federalism, Devolution of Power, and Inclusive Democracy in Nepal and Asia, hosted by Kathmandu University School of Law on November 22-23, 2023.)

Lost Mountain

Although Nepal's issues and agenda received by many stake holders, it is yet to concretize them

By A CORRESPONDNET

Upon their return from participating in COP 28, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Minister of Forest and Environment Dr. Birendra Prasad Mahato stated that the UN Climate Change Summit was effective and result-oriented.

The summit was held just a month after the visit of UN Secretary General António Guterres, who publicly addressed Nepal's receding snow and the threat of glacier lake outburst, which drew a wide response.

During a news conference at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) upon his return from attending COP-28 in the United Arab Emirates, the Prime Minister stated that Nepal effectively and objectively presented its agendas.

Nepal raised climate change issues intensely, as per the PM's statement. PM Prachanda stated that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres informed him that Nepal has been included in the priority list for receiving compensation for the impacts of climate change.

The PM expects that Nepal will receive increased financial and technical assistance now that it is on the priority list for climate finance. Additionally, the UN Secretary-General's recent visit to Nepal has reinforced and intensified Nepal's voice in climate change agendas.

During COP-28, Nepal organized its first Pavilion to discuss climate change issues. Experts, media personnel, and stakeholders shared their views at the Pavilion.

The Prime Minister stated that Nepal clearly asserted its rights on climate change issues and received great appreciation. The use of subjective language, such as 'extraordinary,' has been removed.

PM Prachanda shared that he had a brief meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of COP-28. Modi pledged to continue mutual cooperation between Nepal and

India to effectively hold deliberations and interactions on climate change-related issues. The Minister spoke at a ministerial-level program organized by the Asian Development Bank on December 3rd.

He also spoke at another event, the 'Launching Melamchi Disaster Damage Assessment Report' program, held on the same day.

Mahato also participated in several sideline events. He stated that over 14 sideline events would be held in the Nepali pavilion in the coming days.

COP28 exceeded expectations. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Nepal's Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, joined forces to highlight the impact of climate change on Himalayan glaciers, which sustain one-third of humanity in 11 nations.



India.

Minister for Forest and Environment Dr Birendra Prasad Mahato assessed that COP28 was fruitful for Nepal.

Minister Mahato shared that Nepal's issues were discussed with priority at the global climate event in Dubai. He stated that Nepal presented itself from a unified front, resulting in a stronger voice.

The conference began on November 30 and will continue until December 12. Dr. Mahato viewed that Nepal was highly prioritized during United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' visit to Nepal on the eve of COP28.

Nepal had its own pavilion at the summit, which provided an opportu-

Arup Rajouria, writing for X on December, describes this as a turning point in the fight against climate change. Global leaders must take meaningful action to address this existential threat to humanity. It is imperative to course-correct in order to limit the temperature rise to 1.5°C.

Based on these statements, one can presume that Nepal has made a visible presence. However, critics of the Prime Minister disagree, stating that no visible changes have occurred that benefit Nepal.

Hurting FDI

With the recent statements reaction of political leaders and parliamentary committee on Ncell share has badly rocked the foreign investor coming to Nepal

By A CORRESPONDNET

Amidst criticism from political leaders, parliamentary committees, and some civil society groups regarding the Ncell share issue, Finance Minister Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat has called for foreign investment in Nepal. It is important to note that Dr. Mahat has also expressed concern



about Ncell's reported deal.

During a discussion with development partners at the Finance Ministry about the upcoming 3rd Investment Summit on April 21st and 22nd in Kathmandu, Finance Minister Mahat identified hydro-power, tourism, information technology, and agriculture as the most promising sectors for investment in the country.

He also noted that Nepal offers opportunities for investment in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The country has significant potential for investment. The government has been working to remove obstacles in the investment sector.

However, senior advocate and corporate lawyer Gandhi Pandit expressed disappointment in a recent interview due to the reactions to the Ncell deal. Foreign investors may be discouraged from investing in Nepal after reading the statements and reactions of political leaders, parliamentarians, and intellectuals regarding the Ncell deal.

It is important to clarify our position on foreign direct investment. Senior advocate Pandit, the only lawyer openly defending the rights of foreign investors, stated, 'It is unfortunate that we welcome for-

eign investment but oppose disinvestment.'

Following the deal between Ncell and foreign company Axiata, there has been a blame game among politicians regarding their involvement and kickbacks in the deal. Senior advocate Gandhi emphasized the importance of reading the law and regulations before making any scandalous or politicized statements about the deal. If the deal is fair and lawful, there is no reason to create unnecessary commotion.

In response to the scandal and controversy, Ncell has released a public statement clarifying its position. In a press release, Ncell announced that it is now a 100% Nepali-owned company and that its focus is on creating value for Nepali consumers and contributing to the government's Digital Nepal vision.

Here are some key facts that need to be communicated to shed light on recent developments in Ncell's shareholding:

Satish Lal Acharya, a shareholder of Spectrlite UK and of Nepali origin, stated that Axiata conducted a competitive process to sell its shares in Reynolds Holdings, a company based in St. Kitts. Spectrlite emerged as the winner among several bidders, and the pricing and structure of the transaction were determined through a willing buyer and seller basis. Based on the agreed deal structure, Axiata will receive a base payment and additional benefits in the form of profit-sharing for the next five years, until 2029. The transaction places the enterprise value of Ncell at approximately \$400 million USD, to be realized gradually over time contingent upon the company's performance. This deal represents a significant step towards greater Nepali-origin ownership and management of Ncell.

Axiata provided transparent details of the transaction in their press releases.

The Tax Office has verified that Ncell has fulfilled its tax obligations to date. Any taxes applicable to this deal will be handled in strict accordance with the laws of

Nepal. Ncell is committed to upholding tax compliance throughout this process, reassuring stakeholders of its responsible financial practices.

Ncell is currently in discussions with the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) to secure the necessary consents.

Despite ongoing changes, customers can be assured that the quality of services provided will not be affected. The company is fully committed to delivering high-quality services to all of its customers.

In conclusion, Ncell is committed and capable of diversifying its digital services, enriching the lives of millions of Nepalis. The continuous expansion of network infrastructure, beyond mobile connectivity, presents significant opportunities for the country. Ncell is not only adapting to change but also actively contributing to the digital evolution of Nepal.

During a recent meeting with Nepal's development partners, Finance Minister Dr. Mahat made several promises. Parliament is expected to pass a bill related

Ncell



axiata

to Anti-Money Laundering soon. Before the investment summit, we will finalize Nepal's Sovereign Credit Rating. Our objective is to address all issues and challenges.

Nevertheless, recent political scandals have harmed Nepal's reputation as a secure location for foreign investment.



PROYEL

Youth Empowerment

The PROYEL Project, funded by the European Union and Helvetas, serves as an exemplary model for wider replication.

By KESHAB POUDEL

Seven youth leaders from Sudur Paschim, Karnali, and Madhesh had the valuable opportunities to meet with Helvetas President Regula Rytz and her team from Helvetas Headquarters.

The meeting involved a discussion about a Helvetas Nepal cofounded project that aims to empower young people in eight municipalities in Karnali, Madhesh Province, and other ar-

reas throughout the country. The group consisted of five members from the Youth Sounding Board (YSB) from the governance sub-cohort (which is led by Helvetas Nepal) and two members from the Youth Panel (YP).

The meeting was organized on November 27, 2023 by Promotion of Youth Engagement in Local Governance process (PROYEL) project which is funded by the European Union

and co-funded by Helvetas Nepal. The participants gathered at the Country office of Helvetas Nepal to have an overview on project information and facilitate discussions with youth leaders.

Although YSB operates at the national level and YP at the local level, both programs share the goal of involving youth in the decision-making process regarding governance and development.

The YSB, comprised of

members selected through a rigorous process by the European Union Delegation, aims to bring about a significant and lasting change in the way EU engages young people in its development initiatives.

As part of Helvetas Nepal's PROYEL Project, Youth Panel (YP) members, carefully selected from ward-level candidates, are currently involved in educating and providing information about local governance processes to the youth in eight municipalities.

To initiate the interaction, Aagya Pokharel, the Project Coordinator of the PROYEL project, gave a brief introduction to the project.

"PROYEL presents a unique opportunity for Nepal's youth to receive education, earn a sustainable livelihood, and contribute to the nation's growth," stated Pokharel.

A brief documentary, showcasing the project's implementation and the feedback



from beneficiaries on how it has improved the lives of youths, was presented to President Rytz and her delegation, providing a glimpse of the project activities."

Held in an interactive setting, the discussion lasted for one and a half hours, where the President of Helvetas Rytz and members of the delegation posed frequent queries. The session provided an informative overview of the project and its impact on communities and municipalities.

Anjana Kumari, a 24-year-old resident of Barathahawa Municipality in the Sarlahi district of Madhesh Pradesh, shared that young women in her community are starting to ask local officials, including the ward chair, mayor, and deputy mayor, about budget allocations for youth activities. They are also raising concerns about discrimination and gender-based violence.

"The Madhesh region continues to grapple with prevalent issues of gender-based violence, violence against women, early marriage, and discrimination based on caste, ethnicity, and gender. Kumari highlighted that even since the establishment of the youth panel, they have been fervently advocating for these concerns, leading to some noticeable advancements."

Prem Bahadur B.K., a member of the Youth Panel who also served as YSB from Bheri Municipality in Karnali Province, pointed out that there is a noticeable change happening in youth involvement, especially in regard to local government initiatives.

Ankit Chauhdary, a member of YSB and YP from Barathahawa Municipality in





Abhisekh Bista, another YSB member from Sudur Paschim Province, shares this commitment. By engaging with diverse groups of young people, he discourages them from pursuing foreign studies and encourages them to complete their education within the country. He is a strong advocate for ending child mar-

riage, gender-based violence, and harmful practices like Chaupadi. Madhesh Province, expressed that the establishment of a youth panel at the ward level has greatly contributed to engaging the youth and ensuring that the local government is held accountable.

After the implementation of the project two years ago in five municipalities of the Karnali Province and three in the Madhesh Province, young people are now approaching local governments in an organized manner to demand sufficient budgets for youth. The PROYEL project by Helvetas Nepal is facilitating these changes.

Rakshya Awasthi, representing the Sudur Paschim Province as an YSB member, stated that young people have not yet been fully integrated into national and local projects and program implementation. Avasthi emphasized that although progress has been made, more work is needed.

Nandani Sah, a member of the YSB from Janakpur

Sub-Metropolitan in the Madhesh Province, emphasized the need for more projects targeting young women in the region. These projects aim to combat discrimination, exclusion, early marriage, and domestic violence. As a young advocate, Sah takes pride in her work and is dedicated to making a difference.

Another YSB, Narayan Prasad Rijal, is currently leading initiatives to bolster youth participation in Nepal's policy-making process. As role models for young people and vital members of their communities, young individuals

are encouraged to complete their education within the country. He is a strong advocate for ending child marriage, gender-based violence, and harmful practices like Chaupadi.



have the ability to initiate change by mastering their professions, starting businesses, and innovating.

Awasthi emphasized the significance of youth participation in decision-making and the importance of the YSB program. However, a considerable number of young people in Nepal are unemployed and emigrating in large numbers to foreign countries in search of employment.

Teaming up with young leaders, local partners in the private sector, governments, civil society, and communities, Helvetas strives to achieve long-term and large-scale change that goes beyond the scope of our work.

Nepalese youth face significant challenges such as unemployment and limited access to skills and technology. They also experience exclusion based on factors like gender, caste, ethnicity, and disability. Ultimately, there are fewer opportunities for them to actively involve and engage in public or policy activities, which has resulted in a growing disconnect.

Dr. Prabin Manandhar, the Country Director of Helvetas Nepal, highlighted the lack of understanding on local government systems and procedures, as well as the incomplete knowledge of how to initiate participation in public and political spheres, as major obstacles.

Following the implementation of the federalization process in Nepal, municipalities



have taken the lead in public service delivery. They are now in a unique position to design and implement a comprehensive response to local development and humanitarian issues. Dr. Manandhar emphasized the significance of PROYEL in this context, stating “PROYEL plays a crucial role in creating a platform for establishing new relationships, giving young people a voice and an opportunity to actively participate in local governance and development.”

President Rytz noted that PROYEL’s approach effectively enhances youth involvement in local and national governance. It is heartening to witness enthusiastic young people taking charge at both levels. This kind of meaningful engagement by the youth is a commendable achievement of the project.

She gathered project information and community contributions to drive change. President Rytz actively engaged with

participants, addressing their questions and sharing her experiences from other countries.

President Rytz has pledged that Helvetas will support youth empowerment initiatives such as PROYEL. The President of Helvetas has extensive experience in human development across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Additionally, she has served as the Regional Coordinator.

The PROYEL Project, funded by the European Union and Helvetas, serves as an exemplary model for wider replication. Sudur Paschim, Karnali, and Madhesh, young individuals are leading the way towards a brighter future by breaking free from the secrecy and stigma that once held them captive.

Disaster Governance: Theory And Practice In Nepal



BY: DR. CHANDRALAL PANDEY

The recently occurred 6.4 magnitude earthquake and aftershocks took life of 153 people out of which 101 deaths were reported from Jajarkot and 52 deaths were reported from Rukum West. Nepal is noted to be one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. Earthquakes, climate change, floods and landslides are regular items of hazard menu of the country. The roars of the three tiers of government echo with the six layers of disaster risk reduction and management institutions as provisioned in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2017 and their ambit of functionalities, in theory, to address hazards preventing them from turning into disasters. The Article 47 of the DRRMA 2017 confers power to introduce new guidelines, rules and regulations to address hazards and disasters and thereby ‘Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Rules 2019’ was established. The institutions envisioned represent from federal level to local level and are expected to be extended to ward levels also. However, whenever the hazards turn into disasters whether of local or provincial or national levels, these many institutions often appear little more than functional and appear primarily acting as the agencies of rescue and reliefs.

In post-disaster situations, working in the areas of rescue and reliefs are paramount and prominently relevant. Looking for missing people, finding them and ensuring their safety at the earliest possible time-span is very important life line for saving lives of people trapped in the disasters. Providing reliefs such as food, water and shelter as an immediate supports to minimize and avoid further risks associated with health conditions of disaster affected people or survivors is at the heart of saving lives. Access to clean water, healthy food, and safe shelter inclusive of medical services are very important during and post disaster situations, especially when the disasters disrupt electricity, internet and communication channels, fuel supply, transportation system and life-line livelihood practices.

The incidents also further complicate relief efforts therefore timely disaster reliefs are about saving lives of people under post-disaster trauma and sufferings.

However, the disaster story does not begin and end with rescue and relief activities alone. Instead, it begins with the theory of disaster risk reduction and ends with reconstruction and recovery. The Natural Calamity (Relief) Act of Nepal was a noble legal framework to conduct rescue and provide reliefs in post-disaster situations and it was established in 1982. A similar, but may be a bit farther sighted global architecture known as The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) was adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 by 168 member states of the United Nations. It was a ten year global architecture from 2005 to 2015 and was more focused on disaster management therefore its successor—the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The title, itself, of the existing global architecture is more appealing and clearly indicates that it is about Disaster Risk Reduction not only about disaster management. Let me provide a distinction between Disaster Management and Disaster Risk Reduction for conceptual clarity here in brief. Disaster Management primarily considers about post-disaster situations associated with rescue, relief, reconstruction and recovery while Disaster Risk Reduction focuses on pre-disaster, during disaster and post-disaster circumstances and realities. The DRR activities include from preparedness, mitigation, rescue, and relief to recovery, reconstruction to resurgence of societies to normalcy.

The fundamental reason behind making the Natural Calamity Act of 1982 null and void after introducing the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2017 was that the former focused only on post-disaster management while the latter on all from pre to during to the post-disaster situations. While many components of Sendai Framework have been captured in the Disaster Risk Reduction and

Management Act 2017 with elaborated six layers of institutions from National Council to Executive Committee to National Authority to Provincial Executive Committee to District Disaster Management Committee to Local Disaster Management Committee, the responses being made after 2017 dealing with every disaster occurring in the country demonstrate the belittled role of the 2017 Act and its institutions provisioned from the top to the bottom, from national level to local level. The Sendai Framework provisions seven clear targets and four priorities for action to prevent forthcoming hazards from turning into disasters and to reduce the impacts of disaster risks if occurred. The four key priorities to achieve its targets include (i) Understanding disaster risk; (ii) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; (iii) Investing in disaster reduction for resilience and; (iv) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The framework aims to achieve a substantial reduction of disaster risks and losses in lives, livelihoods and health, and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries over the next 15 years i.e. until 2030.

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2017 was also brought to life, aligning it with the priorities of the global architecture, the Sendai Framework, and the contextualized and localized needs of time and actions but it hardly fulfils the first two out of the four priorities of the global architecture. It appears that Nepal is making efforts to align with the first and second priorities only; while the third and fourth priorities of the global architecture still remain far from realities in all aspects, from philosophizing, understanding, and actualization. There is very little investment in preparedness and mitigation for preventing hazards turning into disasters. This becomes apparently clear when we investigate the budget percentage allocated for DRRM from federal to local level governments. The local communities are not made aware about the frequently occurring hazards at the level of internalization and they are also not trained against such hazards in term of taking steps



for community preparedness and mitigation. In between the actions such as preparedness and mitigation, the practice of having Emergency Kit or Civil Defense Kit (in Nepal BibatJhola) having food, water and other emergency items to last for about three days is a priority across many countries of the world along with emergency assembly points, there are far from realities across all the household and even government offices of Nepal. After every hazard when it turns into disaster, the survivors have to wait for both relief and rescue from external actors because they are not trained

and equipped well, in the first instant, from preventing the hazards turning into disasters and in the second instant, community preparedness when disasters occur. The greater inefficiencies are often shown by the three tiers of governments as they significantly fail to provide timely rescue and relief services to the survivors, keeping the

process of recovery and reconstruction to bring the communities into normalcy far at the distant. Such frequent failures must demand the six layers of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Institutions first to prepare and equip them well, keeping themselves active in normal situations, engaging them in the preparedness and mitigation actions and in, during and post disaster situations, ready to handle the all necessary actions that come along to bring the society back to normalcy from post-disaster situations. If failures persist, there is no reason to roar and echo that Nepal has six layers of institutions to deal with Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. Civil society organizations working in the areas of disaster risk reduction and management can also collaborate and contribute to reducing hazards and preventing them from becoming disasters.

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Small Victories Toward Transformative Journeys

In collaboration with Kshireshwornath Municipality, Helvetas Nepal has had dedicated initiatives focused on uplifting the Musahar community in the municipality. These efforts primarily target livelihood empowerment and income generation, aiming to mitigate longstanding socio-economic disparities and foster sustainable development. During this course of work, a significant hurdle was realized- that a crucial foundation for sustainable development was lacking among legitimate Nepali citizens – the absence of citizenship certificates. Helvetas Nepal primarily served as a facilitator in this scenario, aiming to bridge their humanitarian assistance during the Covid pandemic with long-term development goals.

By KESHAB POUDEL

On the early morning of November 9, a significant gathering took place for a public meeting in the Pakariya-Karmahi Mushariya tole in Ward No. 3 of Kshireshwornath Municipality, Dhanusha district. The assembly consisted of over two hundred individuals, including men, wom-

iladevi shared the painful ordeal her family had experienced with the Chief District Officer (CDO), senior officials from the District Administration Office in Dhanusha, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Ward Chairperson of Kshireshwornath Municipality, and other municipal officials. This ordeal arose from the denial of a citizen-

nity encounter when seeking citizenship certificates.

Both young and old individuals shared emotional accounts about their struggles to start businesses and receive financial aid from local, provincial, and federal governments due to a lack of proper documentation.

The meeting ended with the Chief District Officer (CDO) of Dhanusha district, the Mayor, Ward Chair, and officials from Kshireshwornath Municipality making commitments. This brought a sense of relief to those who had been waiting for years to obtain their citizenship certificates.

“It is unbelievable for me to have met all the high officials, including the CDO, in my small Dalit settlement and shared our problems,” expressed Sada. She added, “I have traveled to Janakpur, the district headquarter, numerous times, sacrificing my daily work, to obtain a citizenship certificate. However, I never had the opportunity to share my problems. I was fortunate enough to have all the officials come to my doorstep to listen to me,” tears streaming down her face.

“At the age of 60, I am ineligible to receive social benefits



en, and the elderly. Among them was Larubati Sada, a 60-year-old, mother of four, who considered this day to be a memorable turning point in her life.

During the meeting, Ush-

iladevi shared the painful ordeal her family had experienced with the Chief District Officer (CDO), senior officials from the District Administration Office in Dhanusha, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Ward Chairperson of Kshireshwornath Municipality, and other municipal officials. This ordeal arose from the denial of a citizen-

ship certificate due to an incorrect spelling of her father’s name. The three-hour public meeting began with a short street play that depicted the difficulties members of the Musahar commu-

provided by wards. Not only was I born, raised, and married here, but my whole family is unable to obtain a citizenship certificate due to missing documentation,” stated Sada. She realized the importance of document when the InElam project provided humanitarian assistance in the form of cash-based support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the open meeting organized by Manab Kalyan Samaj, a local partner of Helvetas Nepal’s InElam Project in collaboration with Kshreshwor-nath Municipality and community based organizations, women shared their personal struggles. This marked the first meeting held in this Dalit settlement. As women shared their painful stories in their native Maithili language, officials made efforts to understand and address their concerns.

Ushiladevi Sada, 50, bravely shared her story of being unable to obtain her own citizenship certificate despite having certificates for her husband, father-in-law, and father, all because she



lacked a marriage certificate.

After listening to the statements of the attendees’ statements, CDO Chakra Pani Pandey, a dynamic administrator, assured that the DAO would address all concerns and provide citizenship certificates to genuine Nepali individuals.

“Every legitimate Nepali will receive a citizenship certificate. The DAO will work closely with the Municipality to review each case and issue certificates in

accordance with the law and constitution. I express my gratitude to the organizers of this hearing,” declared CDO Pandey of Dhanusha district.

During this discussion, someone also shared a happy story. With this facilitative support, Shiva Sati Sada was one of the thirteen individuals from the community who were assisted in reaching out to officials and assembling their case and were able to secure her citizenship certificate. Then, Sada received basic financial literacy, and business management training, and a nominal start up support through she successfully established her own small grocery shop, thereby creating a new income stream for herself. Sada, a 40-year-old ward member and leader of a women’s group, currently grows vegetables on the nearby Aurahi riverbank and operates a grocery store with support from the InElam Project. “I used to earn only Rs. 200,000 a year, which was not enough to even buy food. But now, in a short span of time my annual income has increased by an additional





amount of around Rs. 60,000,” Sada proudly stated.

Following the implementation of this program by the local government and Helvetas, all 65 households of Musahar community in the Karmahi tole of Kshireshwornath Municipality, Ward 3, are now engaged in income generating activities that differ from their previous ones.

“As daily waged workers in agriculture, we never needed a citizenship certificate to receive payment. Despite living here for generations and exercising our right to vote, no one has ever requested our citizenship certificate,” explained Lazbati Sada, a mother of three and a widow. However, out of the 65 Musahar households in Kshireshwornath Municipality, 17 have still not been able to obtain citizenship certificates, including Rebani Sada.

Sukha Dev Yadav, the Mayor of Kshireshwornath Municipality, expressed heartfelt appreciation to Helvetas-Nepal and its local partner for leading initiatives to uplift the Musahar

community. He assured that the municipality is dedicated to facilitating all necessary administrative arrangements to ensure that individuals in the Musahar Community receive their citizenship certificates, promptly stating, “No one will be left behind.”

The Dalit community in the municipality received a much-needed boost from the reassurances and commitments made by the CDO and Mayor. This pro-

vided relief to those without land and citizenship certificates.

Kishore Shah, a Senior Advocate and former President of the Nepal Bar Association Janakpur who was also a part of this discussion in the community presented a paper that outlined the challenges faced by the Musahar community in obtaining citizenship certificates. He emphasized that the constitution and laws offer sufficient provisions to grant citizenship to this community, highlighting the critical need for coordination and collaboration between the District Administration Office (DAO) and Municipality to address the issue.

The Musahar community, that have been historically marginalized in the Madhesh Province, face challenges in accessing government services due to the lack of citizenship certificates. Many of these community members came to realize the importance of citizenship certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. This realization came



about when they encountered difficulties in obtaining the support from Helvetas Nepal's humanitarian assistance of Multipurpose Cash-based Assistance program.

"While conducting a comprehensive study to implement the program, we identified a significant number of individuals who lacked a citizenship certificate, which is a prerequisite for receiving project assistance such as cash and other forms of support," explained, Pramod Kumar Yadav, the Program Coordinator of Manab Kalyan Samaj. To address this critical issue, we engaged in consultations with legal experts, the mayor, deputy mayor, ward chairs, and DAO officials."

"To facilitate the process of obtaining citizenship certificates, we extended legal support to the Musahar community. Recognizing the importance of riverbank agriculture for their livelihoods, we collaborated with the municipality and ward office to secure access to the Aurahi riverbank for the local community," added Yadav.

Amar Kishore Singh who presides as the ward chair in Ward No. 3 said "After consulting with Pramod Yadav and the mayor, we have decided to arrange this interaction program with the CDO."

Despite the recent amendment to the Citizenship Act of 2009, the act has not yet addressed the issues faced by individuals without certification. The CDO office requires a land



ownership certificate as a prerequisite for issuing citizenship certificates. Amar Kishore Singh, the ward chair of Ward No. 3 in Kshireshwornath Municipality further expressed, "I don't understand how a landless Musahar can present a land ownership certificate".

Despite several attempts, over 17 individuals from Musahar community lack citizenship certificates in Karmahi Tole. Hari Gurung from Helvetas said, "We came to this community to provide enterprise development training, but we discovered that citizenship certificate issues were necessary to open bank accounts and register enterprises. Our partner, in collaboration with the municipality and DAO, has facilitated the acquisition of citizenship for individuals interested in joining our program." According to Gurung, "the hearing signifies a promising beginning."

Similarly, Akriti Rana from Helvetas Nepal shared that

the project, which typically focuses on supporting local small-scale entrepreneurs through localized business development services, opportunities for testing and launching new products and technologies, and facilitating valuable networking with suppliers, customers, lenders, and investors, found itself in a novel learning experience. This was uncharted territory for the project, which had not previously addressed such issues.

The Musahar community who have traditionally engaged in daily agricultural labor and cleaning jobs, has now diversified its income sources through activities such as riverbed farming, and small enterprises. This illustrates how a modest program can positively enhance the lives of impoverished Dalits and highlights the interconnectedness of humanitarian assistance during crises with long-term development.

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कृषि विकास बैंक, रामशाहपथ	००१००२०१००२९०७०१४
नेपाल बैंक लिमिटेड, काठमाडौं	००२००१००५१००३९०००००१
एभरेष्ट बैंक लिमिटेड,नयाँ बानेश्वर	००१०११०२२०००१२
स्टान्डर्ड चार्टर्ड बैंक नेपाल लिमिटेड, लाजिम्पाट	०००१०१३२४३८०१
ग्लोबल आइएमई बैंक लिमिटेड, बानेश्वर	००४०१०१०००००५७
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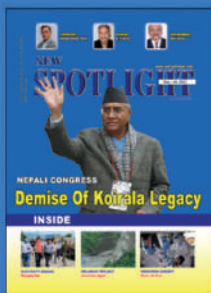
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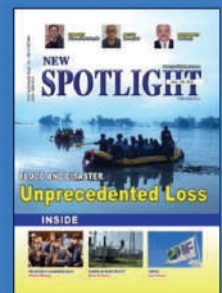
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VOL. 15, No. 07, Oct. 29, 2021 (Kartik 12, 2078) Publisher and Editor: Keshab Prasad Poudel Online Register Number: DOI 584/074-75

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